

Heritage Tourism

One afternoon last month two visitors stopped at City Hall to inquire about the location of the local history museum. The lively, petite, spry senior woman and her middle-aged son were from Madison and had taken a self-guided historic walking tour of Evansville. When asked how they learned about us, the woman pulled from her backpack (yup!) a book entitled "Walking Tours of Wisconsin's Historic Towns," published in 1998. Authored by Lucy Rhodes, Elizabeth McBride and Anita Matcha, the book included walking tours of 34 Wisconsin communities, including Cooksville and Evansville. The woman and her son were visiting all of the showcased communities. I subsequently purchased a copy from Amazon.

The book introduces Evansville as a community with "elegant Victorian residences, perfectly set on shaded streets." An excerpt from the Evansville chapter describes our local architecture. "Elaborate homes represent all the main architectural styles of the late 18th [sic] century: Greek Revival, High Victorian Gothic, Queen Anne, Italianate, Stick Style, Picturesque. If you love detail, you will find it here, in eyebrow windows, Ionic columns, gable roofs and scrolled brackets. Perhaps the most noticeable features, though, are Evansville's porches. You see them on almost every home in the historic district—a reminder of those relaxed Victorian summers when the evening's entertainment centered on reading the newspaper in a rocking chair and chatting with the neighbors who walked by."

The authors explain early development in Evansville. "In 1845...only a handful of log buildings constituted the town. ... More settlers came from western New York and Vermont. A religious group, they platted streets leading to a parklike square on which they built the Free Methodist Seminary. Today, their streetscape, the seminary, and the Yankee character all remain."

Over the years, many visitors have enjoyed the wonderful architecture of our community. In late 2002, the Historic Preservation Commission produced its Historic Evansville Walking Guide, highlighting Wisconsin's second historic district (Mineral Point is home to the first district). More than 4,500 copies of the guide have been distributed. Recently, the Walking Guide was placed on the City of Evansville website.

The Grove Society has hosted several Historic House Tours, drawing hundreds of participants for each tour. The Society has held gourmet progressive dinners in several of our historic homes. Hundreds of citizens have enjoyed the historic trolley tours that are part of our Fourth of July festivities. Our historic buildings are highlighted in the Discover Wisconsin television program. The new "Choice Destination" city brochure includes a historic architecture walking tour. Recently, two books about Historic Evansville have been authored by Ruth Ann Montgomery, with the newest of them scheduled for release on July 19.

Evansville celebrates its heritage with many other events and activities. The Harvest Windmill Festival focuses on our agricultural tradition. Windmills on Parade showcases our manufacturing history with art. The summer outdoor music concerts at Lake Leota, annual ice cream social on the library lawn, and holiday horse-drawn wagon rides evoke memories of earlier times. Programming activities of Eager Free Public Library, the Robinson Society, and our new local history museum highlight our rich community history. Maple Hill Cemetery history theatre brings to life earlier generations of our citizens. Evansville understands the value of a strong sense of place and belonging. We are rewarded with a close-knit, vibrant home.

Discover Wisconsin Update

The Evansville program aired the weekend of June 12; here is some of the early feedback. Cobblestone Inn has received a number of calls referencing Discover Wisconsin. Windmill Antiques has received visitors, several from Illinois, as a result of the Discover Wisconsin show. Allen Creek Gallery has had visitors who saw the program. Discover Wisconsin visitors have patronized Brown School Cafe and Rockn' Rollz. The Chamber has received an Illinois call inquiring about the date of the Chocolate Extravaganza. Another call to the Chamber requested assistance in arranging an overnight visit for a number of Illinois visitors.

Tourists have been seen with the walking tour "map" viewing homes along Main Street. The local history museum is receiving visitors. Approximately two dozen Red Hat ladies have arranged a visit to Evansville in mid-August.

Last Sunday morning I watched UPFRONT with Mike Gousha on Channel 27. Three times during the program there was a Discover Wisconsin ad that encouraged registering for a choice destination prize package to Evansville, showing the screen-filling Evansville Chamber logo. UPFRONT airs in the Milwaukee, Madison, Green Bay, Wausau, LaCrosse, and Eau Claire viewing areas.

In early September a Discover Wisconsin radio spot will air on more than forty radio stations promoting the Harvest Windmill Festival and Windmills on Parade. Keith Hennig, last year's windmill auctioneer, will be interviewed by Stephanie Klett, host of Discover Wisconsin.

Besides Discover Wisconsin marketing, this week there are radio spots and other advertising of the Fourth of July events. There will be a live JVL broadcast at Lake Leota on July 1 and a live Hog 105.9 broadcast on July 3. Charter customers will see ads on the History Channel and crawlers on the Weather Channel.

A billboard north of Evansville markets the Evansville Community Theater production of "Oklahoma." The Rodgers and Hammerstein production will be staged beginning July 9.

Evansville Community Partnership and the Harvest Windmill Committee were successful in submitting the Harvest Windmill Festival and Windmills on Parade for inclusion in

“Midwest Living” magazine. The September 10-12, 2010, Festival was selected for the Celebrations section of the September/October issue. It will be available in stores in mid-August.

Economic Update

Earlier this month John and I spent two days of relaxation visiting other communities in our area. We stayed at the award-winning Oscar H. Hanson House Bed and Breakfast in Cambridge, and enjoyed two Cambridge eateries. In Fort Atkinson, we lunched at the Velvet Lips Lounge, a restaurant included in the Fort Atkinson Discover Wisconsin show. We found several treasures at the Five Star Antique Mall. We also explored Waterloo and Lake Mills.

The impacts of our nation’s economic challenges were visible on Main Street in all of these communities. However, we also saw a resoluteness and resiliency in the businesses as well. Each community is working at maximizing its strengths. As an example, Cambridge is working on marketing itself as a small destination wedding venue.

The coming months will be important and busy for Wisconsin communities. Budgeting for 2011 will be the most challenging in decades as the economic recession hits full force at the local government level. We will be again asking for community input as we build a lean budget for next year.

Critical state-wide conversations, among government, business, academia, and the public, are occurring to address systemic economic and demographic realities in Wisconsin. It is imperative that productive, innovative measures be taken to secure a better future for our state. We must “sift and winnow” the best ideas from many proposals; partisanship and turf issues are detrimental to Wisconsin citizens. We need to roll up our sleeves and get to work—our children and grandchildren are depending on us. I have been involved in discussions of government collaborations that can streamline services and lower costs of government—I’ll be providing future updates.

Energy Saving Tip

The International Energy Agency estimates that the energy used by household electronic gadgets could triple by 2030. The following example is provided for reducing energy use. Watching a plasma TV while playing music on a stereo and surfing the Net on a desktop computer can consume 740 watts and raise your monthly energy bill by \$5.46 for every two hours of use. Doing all of those things on a laptop would use only 62 watts, with a corresponding \$.34 of monthly energy cost for two hours of use.

Community Announcements

City offices will be closed on Monday, July 5, for the holiday.

Yard waste pick-up occurs the first full week of each month. Pick-up will occur July 6-9.

Contributions to the Care Closet typically fall off during the summer, a time of high and increasing demand. Food and household items needed the most are: canned meats and tuna, canned fruits, cereal, peanut butter, jelly, boxed meals, toothpaste, dish soap, deodorant, and shampoo. Please consider a donation. There are bins located at Eager Free Public Library and Evansville churches as part of AWARE in Evansville's "Food for the 4th" drive.

There are many local events occurring the next week. Participate with your friends, family, and neighbors and enjoy our hometown celebration. The Library Ice Cream Social on July 2, Historic District Trolley Tours, Museum Open House, Car Show, Tractor Pull, Parade, Kids Activities, Lions Club Chicken BBQ following the parade on July 4, Youth Center Ducky Derby, Lake Leota Lunker Lob, Home Talent Baseball, Evansville Idol, great music, food, and fireworks are just some of the activities. It is the best celebration in the area!

Evansville Community Theater's production of "Oklahoma" is scheduled for six performances, beginning on July 9 through July 17. Tickets can be purchased at Kopecky's Piggly Wiggly, Roger Roth CPA and Associates, and the Evansville Pharmacy. I already have tickets; it is one of my favorite musicals.

Evansville Thanks

Jean and Tony Wyse and Shelley and Mary Bisch deserve our thanks for coordinating the planting, installation, and watering of the flower baskets on the light poles in our downtown. We receive many compliments on how great our downtown looks.

Hundreds of citizens are involved in making a successful holiday celebration. As you enjoy the next week, take notice of all the volunteers around you. On behalf of our community, I thank all of you for your time and efforts!